

Maine Child Care Licensing

Child Care Licensing's primary mission is to ensure the health and safety of children and to support preventive, protective, and quality child care services. Child Care Licensing meets this mission through monitoring, providing technical assistance, and establishing partnerships with providers, parents, and the child care stakeholder community.

The Department's Child Care Licensing Unit provides oversight and support of licensed Child Care Facilities and Family Child Care Providers with 18 Child Care Licensing Specialists and 3 Licensing Supervisors. All children and families, regardless of age, ethnicity, cultural background, gender, socioeconomic status, or ability, are afforded the same protections under law and regulations for child care services.



What is the Monthly Message?

Child Care Licensing's Monthly Message is being sent to all of you, Maine's valuable licensed child care providers! We'll be including general updates, reminders, and bite size interpretive guidelines. As a reminder, our goal over the course of this year is to create a single comprehensive interpretive guide for each child care licensing rule. Think of this as a compliance guide that allows for a shared understanding of the requirements, the intent/rationale, and for some requirements a description of how the rule is measured. We hope that these monthly bite size interpretive guidelines will immediately increase understanding, trust, and compliance.

DID YOU KNOW?

Staff *Highlights*

According to the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety, motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of unintentional deaths of children under 16 years of age in the United States. The proper use of child restraints (i.e., car seats, booster seats, seat belts) is the most effective method available to prevent fatalities in a motor vehicle crash.

Upwards of 3 out of every 4 children in child restraints are not properly secured, some not restrained at all. Only consistent and correct use of child safety seats will offer the protection children need.

Welcome Child Care Licensing Specialist, Lara Maloney. Lara comes to the Department with extensive experience in both child care and public schools for over 30 years. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and has worked for the past 16 years as a Center Director in the Portland area. Lara joined Children's Licensing and Investigation Services on Monday August 14, 2023, and will be covering parts of Cumberland and York Counties.

GREAT NEWS!

Licensing application fees were scheduled to be reinstated as of October 1, 2023; however, you do not need to send payment with your renewal application as coverage of all application fees will continue until notified otherwise.

Important Reminders

Transportation and Pedestrian Safety

It is important to follow safe travel practices during both routine transportation as well as during field trips. Transporting children in child care is considered a high-risk activity which requires permission by parents. All Child Care Staff Members need to be aware that transporting children requires thoughtful planning to ensure the safety of all children and staff.

Prior to transporting children please review the rules 10-148 C.M.R. Ch. 32 and Ch. 33 Section 17. As required by rule, all drivers must have the proper license to drive the class of motor vehicle being used, submit to an annual Bureau of Motor Vehicle background check through their Child Care Licensing Specialist, and complete a Department-approved training every two years. Please contact your Licensing Specialist for information regarding these trainings.

When applicable, a policy for transportation of children is required per 10 -148 C.M.R. Ch. 32 Section 2(F)(9)(xv) and Ch. 33 Section 2(G)(7)(a)(xv). It is best practice to have a transportation policy that outlines the following as recommended by Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs see <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/9.2.5.1> and <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/9.2.5.2>:

- Licensing of vehicles and drivers.
- Vehicle selection to safely transport children.
- Operation and maintenance of vehicles.
- Driver selection, training, and supervision.
- Child to staff ratio during transport.
- Accessibility to first aid kit, emergency ID/contact and pertinent health information for passengers.
- Permitted and prohibited activities during transport for staff and children.
- Use of seat belts and child restraint systems.
- Drop-off and pick-up plans and protocols.
- Plan for communication between the driver and program staff.
- Maximum travel time for children (no more than forty-five minutes in one trip is recommended).
- Procedures to ensure no child is left in the vehicle at the end of the trip or left unsupervised outside or inside the vehicle during loading and unloading of the vehicle.

Transportation Safety Considerations

- Make sure the vehicle you are using is in good working order and that you have the proper insurance.
- Be familiar and comply with State of Maine Child passenger restraint laws.
- Ensure proper installation of child restraint seats.

CHILD CARE LICENSING MONTHLY MESSAGE AUGUST 2023

- Have a charged phone with you so you can communicate with emergency personnel or parents in the event of an emergency.
- Visually supervise children at all times.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle.
- Have an accurate, readable attendance roster.
- Use active supervision practices to include taking attendance at regular intervals, including at each transition point and check children by both name and face.

Parent Drop-Off and Pick Up Safety

Best practices from Caring for our Children Health and Safety Standards include:

- Identify safe drop off and pick up points of children at your program and communicate this information to parents.
- Consider requiring parents to drop off and pick up only at the curb or at an off-street location protected from traffic.
- Ensure that any adult who supervises drop-off and loading can see and assure that children are clear of the perimeter of all vehicles before any vehicle moves.
- The adult who is supervising the child should be required to stay with each child until the responsibility for that child has been accepted by the individual designated in advance to care for that child.
- Vehicles should not be allowed to idle in the facility's designated parking areas at any time, including during drop-off and pick-up.

Bus Stop Safety

It's important to discuss bus stop safety with the children in your care. Some tips include:

- Arrive to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is expected to arrive.
- Ensure all children in your care are supervised and you are close enough to provide prompt intervention if needed.
- Children should be at least 10 feet away or five big steps from the curb or edge of the road where the bus will pick up.
- Remind children the bus stop isn't a place where they should be running and playing.
- Children should wait for the bus to come to a complete stop and the bus driver says it is okay for them to get on or off.
- Encourage children to use the handrails to prevent falls.
- Children should never walk behind the school bus and if they need to walk in front of the bus make sure they are at least ten feet in front of the bus before crossing in front. Children should also make eye contact with the bus driver before crossing to ensure it is okay for them to cross.
- If a child drops something while crossing immediately alert the bus driver and stop the child from picking up the item, because the driver may not be able to see them.

Pedestrian Safety

- Identify safe walking routes and use routes that have sidewalks.
- Use marked crosswalks to cross the street and look left-right-left for vehicles or bikes before crossing the street.
- Make sure children are not playing, pushing or shoving others while on a walk.
- Staff should avoid distractions such as phones and be watching the road for any possible safety concerns.
- Consider using a walking rope with children.



Interpretive Guidelines

(Please refer to 10-148 C.M.R Ch. 32 and Ch. 33 for a complete review of all requirements)

We are currently working on compiling a comprehensive document with all the interpretive guidelines we have developed and included in the Monthly Messages between January and July.

If there are rules that you feel need additional guidance that have not yet been addressed, please send an email to your Child Care Licensing Specialist by Friday, September 29, 2023. We will add any additional Interpretive Guidelines needed and get the comprehensive document out as soon as it is ready.

Thank you for all that you do for Maine children and families.